

Religious leaders seek nuclear weapons views

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A group of 48 Catholic, Protestant and Jewish leaders concerned about U.S. nuclear weapons policy questioned the major U.S. presidential candidates about it and released the candidates' answers Sept. 7.

Only Green Party candidate Ralph Nader answered the 10-point questionnaire in full.

The campaign organizations of Texas Gov. George W. Bush, Republican, and Vice President Al Gore, Democrat, provided previous statements or speeches by their candidates, which answered some questions but did not address others.

Patrick Buchanan and John Hagelin, competing Reform Party candidates, did not respond to the questionnaire at all.

Bush, Gore and Nader all expressed a desire to reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal, with Nader calling for deepest immediate cuts.

Bush said the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is not enforceable or verifiable, but Gore and Nader strongly fa-



vored it, saying they would give high priority to its ratification by the United States.

At a press conference in Washington releasing the results, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit said nuclear disarmament is "the most important moral question the United States faces and the whole human community faces."

He expressed strong disappointment at the lack of any response by Gore or Bush to the religious group's first question, concerning morality.

It asked: "What are your views on the morality of pos-

session, threatened use and actual use of nuclear weapons? To what extent do you agree or disagree with the broad consensus that has emerged within the faith community on the inherent immorality of nuclear weapons?"

Nader said, "Nuclear weapons have no moral or practical use for any purpose except as a deterrent to nuclear threats. The U.S. government's refusal to adopt a no-first-use policy is a striking example of political immorality."

He said as president he would adopt a no-first-use policy and added that, as the world leader in nuclear weapons technology, "the United States has the moral obligation to take the lead in working for their elimination."

Bishop Gumbleton, who was on the committee which developed the U.S. bishops' 1983 peace pastoral, was one of six Catholic prelates among the 48 religious leaders who signed the letter asking the candidates for their views.

The other Catholic signers were Bishop Matthew H. Clark; Archbishop Patrick F. Flores of San Antonio; and Bishops Victor H. Balke of Crookston, Minn.;

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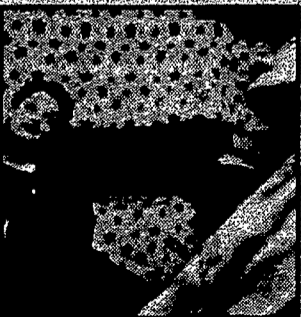
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Changes challenge church teachers

One of the most important qualities a catechist needs is a sense of humor, according to Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, head of the Diocese of Albany, who illustrated his contention by telling this anecdote.

One day, while driving down the road, he saw in his rearview mirror the flashing lights of a police car. Thinking he was being pulled over for some infraction, the bishop drove to the side of the road and stopped his vehicle, and began looking for his registration in his glove compartment. As he did so, he also noticed in his mirror that another vehicle had pulled over behind him, and the officer had gotten out of his patrol car and was talking to the driver.

When the officer finished with the first driver, he came over to the bishop's car and said, "And what's wrong with you, you got a guilty conscience?"

"He wasn't after me at all," the bishop said, laughing.

Catechist qualities

Poking fun at oneself is part of keeping a healthy attitude in ministry, the bishop noted in a presentation before 150 catechists and youth ministers from the Diocese of Rochester on Aug. 30 at the Holiday Inn, Waterloo. The pastoral leaders were there for the diocese's fall gathering of catechists and youth ministers, and the theme of the day was "Celebrating Our Ministry as Cat-

echists."

"Humor does not deny hurt," the bishop told his audience. "But it does become that vehicle through which hurt and pain can be dealt with constructively."

In his speech, the bishop outlined several other qualities he said he believed one needed to catechize on behalf of Catholicism.

"We must allow the Holy Spirit to move us where the Spirit will," he said, noting that the church must not only be known for its opposition to such ills as abortion and artificial birth control, but also be known for the positive vision of justice and charity it upholds.

"One cannot lead from a predominantly negative vision," he stressed.

He urged his listeners to become well-read in the various theologies and pastoral writings available to avoid becoming enslaved to "pet theories" and "gurus." He added that the church today exists in an intellectually challenging environment that calls for people to work on reconciling faith and science, religion and culture. He added that feeding oneself a steady intellectual diet helps to prevent "burn-out" and "dropping out."

The church's teachers also need to have "a deep and abiding trust in God's providence," Bishop Hubbard said. "We are constantly living in the balance between the cross and the Resurrection."

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STORY BY ROB CULLIVAN

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